



Maldives

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2002](#)

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The Republic of Maldives has a parliamentary style of government with a strong executive. The President appoints the Cabinet, members of the judiciary, and one-sixth of the Parliament. The President derives additional influence from his constitutional roles as the "Supreme authority to propagate the tenets of Islam." Political parties officially were discouraged, and candidates for the unicameral legislature, the People's Majlis, ran as individuals. The Majlis selected a single presidential nominee who was approved or rejected in a national referendum. President Gayoom was approved for a fifth 5-year term in 1998. The Majlis must approve all legislation and is empowered to enact legislation without presidential approval. Civil law is subordinate to Shari'a (Islamic law), but civil law generally is applied in criminal and civil cases. The judiciary was subject to executive influence.

The civilian authorities maintain effective control of the National Security Service (NSS). The NSS includes the armed forces and police, and its members serve in both police and military capacities during their careers. The Director of the NSS reports to the Minister of Defense. The police division investigates crimes, collects intelligence, makes arrests, and enforces house arrest. There were no reports that security forces committed human rights abuses.

Tourism and fishing provide employment for more than one-half of the work force. Tourism accounts for 30 percent of government revenues and roughly 70 percent of foreign exchange receipts. The population is approximately 270,000. Agriculture and manufacturing continue to play a minor role in the economy, which is constrained by a severe shortage of labor and lack of arable land. The per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 2001 was \$2,100 (25,892 Rufiyaa), and the GDP growth rate was approximately 2 percent.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. The President's power to appoint a significant portion of the Parliament constrains citizens' ability to change their government. A continued easing of government restrictions and the Press Council's balanced handling of issues related to journalistic standards allowed a greater diversity of views in the media. The Government limits freedom of assembly and association, and does not permit the formation of political parties. There were significant restrictions on the freedom of religion. In the past, the Government has detained arbitrarily and expelled foreigners for proselytizing and detained citizens who converted. Although the Government has undertaken a number of programs addressing women's issues, women faced a variety of legal and social disadvantages. The Government also restricted certain worker rights.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of the arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them. There was an unconfirmed report of beatings or other mistreatment of persons in police custody during the year; however, by year's end this

could not be independently verified (see Section 1.d.). There were no reports of public floggings (which are allowed under Shari'a as interpreted in the country), as in past years. Punishments usually were confined to fines, compensatory payment, house arrest, imprisonment, or banishment to a remote atoll. The Government generally permitted those who are banished to receive visits by family members.

The country's prison was destroyed by fire in 1999. Following the fire, the Government transferred prisoners to a temporary facility, which housed a fluctuating population of approximately 300 inmates.

Prison conditions at the existing facility, including food and housing, generally were adequate. Prisoners were allowed to work and were given the opportunity for regular exercise and recreation. Spouses were allowed privacy during visits with incarcerated partners. The Government was surveying prison facilities in other countries to incorporate international standards and improvements in the reconstruction of the prison, and it has requested training for prison guards. Women were held separately from men. Children were held separately from adults. Persons arrested for drug use are sent to a "drug rehabilitation center" (on a space available basis) where sleeping quarters and most activities are segregated; although common areas were shared by all.

The Government has permitted prison visits by foreign diplomats. The issue of visits by human rights groups was not known to have arisen during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution states that no person shall be arrested or detained for more than 24 hours without being informed of the grounds for arrest or detention.

Police initiate investigations based on suspicion of criminal activity or in response to written complaints from citizens, police officers, or government officials. They were not required to obtain warrants for arrests. Based on the results of police investigations, the Attorney General referred cases to the appropriate court. The authorities generally kept the details of a case confidential until they were confident that the charges were likely to be upheld. In the past, persons have been held for long periods without charge, but there were no reports of such occurrences during the year.

Depending upon the charges, a suspect may remain free, be detained in prison, or placed under house arrest for 15 days during investigations. The President may extend pretrial detention for an additional 30 days, but in most cases the suspect is released if not brought to trial within 15 days. Those who are released pending trial may not leave a specific atoll. Within 24 hours of an arrest, an individual must be told of the grounds for the arrest. An individual then can be held for 7 days. If no legal proceedings have been initiated within 7 days, the case is referred to an anonymous 3-member civilian commission appointed by the President that can authorize an additional 15 days of detention. After that time, if legal proceedings still have not been initiated, a judge must sanction the continued detention on a monthly basis. Although there was no right to legal counsel during police interrogation, detainees were granted access to family members. There was no provision for bail.

The Government may prohibit access to a telephone and nonfamily visits to those under house arrest. While there have been no reported cases of incommunicado detention in the past few years, the law does not provide safeguards against this abuse.

There were no reports of religious prisoners during the year; however, there were several reports of religious detainees during the year. The law limits a citizen's right to freedom of expression in order to protect the "basic tenets of Islam." According to Amnesty International and other sources, four individuals were arrested for distributing Islamist and antigovernment literature during the year. By year's end, three of the men were convicted to lengthy prison sentences for extremism and subversion, and the fourth man was released. In addition, a Muslim clergyman reportedly was questioned and temporarily detained during an investigation into accusations that he had made Islamist-tinged sermons in June.

Member of Parliament (M.P.) Abdullah Shakir was arrested in July 2001 and released the following month. There was some dispute as to why he was arrested; the Government states he was arrested on a purely civil matter, which since has been resolved, but international human rights groups claimed that he was arrested for his support of a petition to form political parties in the country (see Section 2.b.). In March Shakir's appeal against the 2001 sentence was rejected by the high court.

There were no reports of the external exile of citizens during the year. In the past, the Government sometimes has banished convicted criminals to inhabited atolls away from their home communities, but there were no reports that this occurred during the year.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution does not provide for an independent judiciary, and the judiciary is subject to executive influence. In addition to his authority to review High Court decisions, the President influences the judiciary through his power to appoint and dismiss judges, all of whom serve at his pleasure and are not subject to confirmation by the Majlis. The President also may grant pardons and amnesties.

There were three courts: One for civil matters; one for criminal cases; and one for family and juvenile cases. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Justice, the President appoints a principal judge for each court. There was also a High Court in Male, which was independent of the Justice Ministry and which handled a wide range of cases, including politically sensitive ones. The High Court also acts as court of appeals. High Court rulings can be reviewed by a five-member advisory council appointed by the President. The President also has authority to affirm judgments of the High Court, to order a second hearing, or to overturn the Court's decision. In addition to the Male court, there were 204 general courts on the islands.

There were no jury trials. Most trials were public and conducted by judges and magistrates trained in Islamic, civil, and criminal law. Magistrates usually adjudicate cases on outer islands, but when more complex legal questions were involved, the Justice Ministry would send more experienced judges to handle the case.

The Constitution provides that an accused person be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and that an accused person has the right to defend himself "in accordance with Shari'a." During a trial, the accused also may call witnesses, and be assisted by a lawyer. Courts do not provide lawyers to indigent defendants. Judges question the concerned parties and attempt to establish the facts of a case.

Civil law is subordinate to Shari'a, which is applied in situations not covered by civil law as well as in certain acts such as divorce and adultery. Courts adjudicating matrimonial and criminal cases generally do not allow legal counsel in court because, according to a local interpretation of Shari'a, all answers and submissions should come directly from the parties involved. However, the High Court allowed legal counsel in all cases, including those in which the rights to counsel was denied in lower court. Under the country's Islamic practice, the testimony of two women is required to equal that of one man in matters involving Shari'a, such as adultery, finance, and inheritance. In other cases, the testimony of men and women were equal (see Section 5).

There were no confirmed reports of political prisoners. Human rights agencies alleged that there are political prisoners; however, the Government maintained that these prisoners were convicted of crimes not related to politics.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits security officials from opening or reading letters, telegrams, and wireless messages or monitoring telephone conversations, "except as expressly provided by law." The NSS may open the mail of private citizens and monitor telephone conversations if authorized in the course of a criminal investigation.

Although the Constitution provides that residential premises and dwellings should be inviolable, there is no legal requirement for search or arrest warrants. The Attorney General or a commanding officer of the police must approve the search of private residences.

The government policy to encourage a concentration of the population on the larger islands continued, and the policy generally was successful in moving a significant number of citizens to the larger islands.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law prohibits public statements that are contrary to Islam, threaten the public order, or are libelous. The Penal Code prohibits inciting citizens against the Government. However, an amendment to the Penal Code decriminalized "true account(s)" by journalists of governmental actions.

Regulations that make publishers responsible for the content of the material they published remain in effect, but no legal actions against publishers were initiated during the year.

The Press Council is composed of lawyers, private and government media representatives, and other government officials. The Council reviews charges of journalistic misconduct (advising the Ministry of Information, Arts, and Culture on measures to be taken against reporters, when appropriate) and promotes professional standards within the media by recommending reforms and making suggestions for improvement. Private journalists have said that they are satisfied with the Council's objectivity and performance. The Government agreed that private journalists, rather than the Government, should take responsibility for preparation of a journalistic code of ethics. Individual newspapers and journals established their own ethical guidelines in many cases.

Most major media outlets were owned either by the Government or its sympathizers. Nonetheless, these sympathetic outlets on occasion strongly criticize the Government.

Almost 200 newspapers and periodicals were registered with the Government, only some of which publish on a regular basis. Aafathis, a morning daily, often was critical of government policy, as was the Monday Times, a weekly English language magazine. Two dailies, Miadhu and Haveeru, were progovernment.

The Government owned and operated the only television and radio stations. It did not interfere with foreign broadcasts or with the sale of satellite receivers. Reports drawn from foreign newscasts were aired on the Government television station. Cable News Network (CNN) was shown daily, uncensored, on local television.

There were no reports of government censorship of the electronic media; nor were there closures of any publications or reports of intimidation of journalists.

Television news and public affairs programming routinely discussed topics of concern and freely criticized government performance. Regular press conferences with government ministers continued. Journalists were more self-confident than in the past; self-censorship appeared to have diminished, although it remained a problem. Since it is not clear when criticism violates the law prohibiting public statements that were contrary to Islam, threaten the public, or were libelous, journalists and publishers continued to watch what they say, particularly on political topics, to avoid censure by the Government.

There were no legal prohibitions on the import of foreign publications except for those containing pornography or material otherwise deemed objectionable to Islamic values. No seizures of foreign publications were reported during the year.

The Internet is available. There were no government attempts, other than blocking pornographic material, to interfere with its use.

The Government did not restrict academic freedom. Some teachers reportedly are vocal in their criticism of the Government.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly "peaceably and in a manner that does not contravene the law;" however, the Government imposed limits on this right in practice. The Home Ministry permitted public political meetings during electoral campaigns, but limited them to small gatherings on private premises.

The Government imposes some limits on freedom of association. The Government registered clubs and other private associations if they do not contravene Islamic or civil law. While not forbidden by law, the President officially discouraged political parties on the grounds that they were inappropriate to the homogeneous nature of society. The President reaffirmed this position when he decided against a petition to form a political party in June 2001. One signatory to the petition was M.P. Abdullah Shakir, who subsequently was arrested, but was released soon thereafter. Some observers believed his arrest was connected to his support for the creation of political parties in the country, but the Government maintained that he was arrested in connection with a civil matter (see Section 1.e.). There were unconfirmed reports that the Government harassed politicians who signed the petition to form political parties. During the year, Mohammed Nasheed lost his seat in the Majlis after he was convicted of petty theft. He reportedly was released from internal exile in late August. Some observers claim that the theft charge was fabricated to punish Nasheed for supporting a movement to form a political party and for his criticism of President Gayoom (see Section 3).

During the year, many Majlis members were active and outspoken critics of the Government and called for closer parliamentary examination of government policy.

Although not prohibited, there were no active local human rights groups in the country. The Government has been responsive to requests from foreign governments and international organizations to examine human rights problems (see Section 4). While the Government also does not prohibit labor unions, it recognizes neither the right to form them nor the right to strike. There were no reports of efforts to form unions or to strike during the year (see Section 6).

c. Freedom of Religion

Freedom of religion is restricted significantly. The Constitution designates the Sunni branch of Islam as the official state religion, and the Government interprets this provision to impose a requirement that citizens be Muslims. The practice of any religion other than Islam is prohibited by law. Foreign residents are allowed to practice their religion if they do so privately and do not encourage citizens to participate. President Gayoom repeatedly has stated that no other religion should be allowed in the country, and the Home Affairs Ministry has announced special programs to safeguard and strengthen religious unity. The President, the members of the People's Majlis, and cabinet members must be Muslims.

There were no places of worship for adherents of other religions. The Government prohibits the importation of icons and religious statues, but it generally permitted the importation of individual religious literature, such as Bibles, for personal use. It also prohibited non-Muslim clergy and missionaries from proselytizing and conducting public worship services. Conversion of a Muslim to another faith was a violation of Shari'a and may result in punishment. In the past, would-be converts have been detained and counseled regarding their conversion from Islam. Foreigners have been detained and expelled for proselytizing. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of foreigners detained for proselytizing.

Islamic instruction was a mandatory part of the school curriculum, and the Government funds the salaries of religious instructors. The Government has established a Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs to provide guidance on religious matters. The Government also has set standards for individuals who conduct Friday services at mosques to ensure adequate theological

qualifications, and to ensure that services were not dominated by radicals.

Under the country's Islamic practice, certain legal provisions discriminate against women (see Sections 1.e., 3, and 5).

For a more detailed discussion see the 2002 International Religious Freedom Report.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

Citizens are free to travel at home and abroad, to emigrate, and to return. Because of overcrowding, the Government discouraged migration to the capital island of Male or its surrounding atoll. Foreign workers often were housed at their worksites. Their ability to travel freely was restricted, and they were not allowed to mingle with the local population on the islands.

The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government has not formulated a policy regarding refugees, asylees, or first asylum. The issue of the provision of first asylum did not arise during the year. The Government cooperates with the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Citizens' ability to change their government is constrained, and the strong executive exerts significant influence over both the legislature and the judiciary. Under the Constitution, the Majlis chooses a single presidential nominee, who must be a Sunni Muslim male, from a list of self-announced candidates for the nomination. Would-be nominees for president were not permitted to campaign for the nomination. The nominee is then confirmed or rejected by secret ballot in a nationwide referendum. From a field of five candidates, President Gayoom was nominated by the Majlis and was confirmed by referendum for a fifth 5-year term in 1998. Observers from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) found the referendum to be free and fair.

The Office of the President was the most powerful political institution. The Constitution gives Shari'a preeminence over civil law and designates the President as the "supreme authority to propagate the tenets" of Islam. The President's authority to appoint one-sixth of the Majlis members, which was one-third of the total needed for nominating the president, provided the president with a power base and strong political leverage. The President also was Commander in Chief of the armed forces, the Minister of Defense and National Security, the Minister of Finance and Treasury, and the Governor of the Maldivian Monetary Authority. The elected members of the Majlis, who must be Muslims, serve 5-year terms. All citizens over 21 years of age may vote. Of the body's 50 members, 42 are elected and the President appoints 8 members. Individuals or groups were free to approach members of the Majlis with grievances or opinions on proposed legislation, and any member may introduce legislation. There were no political parties, which were officially discouraged (see Section 2.b.).

Relations between the Government and the Majlis have been constructive. The Government may introduce legislation but may not enact a bill into law without the Majlis' approval. The Majlis may enact legislation into law without presidential assent if the President fails to act on the proposal within 30 days or if a bill is repassed with a two-thirds majority. In the past few years, the Majlis increasingly have become independent, challenging government policies and rejecting government-proposed legislation.

For the past several years, the Majlis have held a question period during which members may question government ministers about public policy. Debate on the floor since the question period was instituted has become increasingly sharp and open.

Elections to the People's Majlis last were held in 1999. According to observers from the SAARC, the elections were generally free and fair. A by-election was held in April following the controversial expulsion of M.P. Mohammed Nasheed from the Majlis, upon his conviction for theft (see Section 2.b.). According to observers, the election was generally free and fair.

There were 5 women in the 48-member Majlis. There was one woman in the Cabinet. Women were not eligible to become president but may hold other government posts. However, for reasons of tradition and culture, relatively few women sought or were selected for public office. In December 2001, the position of Atoll Chief of Felidhe was awarded to a woman, Haseena Moosa. In order to increase participation by women in the political process, the Government continued a political awareness campaign in the atolls. In the November 1999 elections, six women ran for seats and two were elected. During the 1999 elections, observers from the SAARC noted that women participated equally in the electoral process. Following the elections, President Gayoom appointed an additional three women to the Majlis.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Although not prohibited, there were no active local human rights groups. The Government has been very responsive to the interest of foreign governments in examining human rights problems. A number of international human rights organizations, such as UNICEF, are present in the country. The Government cooperated with these international organizations.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for the equality of all citizens before the law, but there is no specific provision to prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, or social status. Women traditionally have been disadvantaged, particularly in terms of the application of Shari'a, in matters such as divorce, education, inheritance, and testimony in legal proceedings.

Women

Women's rights advocates agreed that domestic violence and other forms of violence against women were not widespread. There were no firm data on the extent of violence against women because of the value attached to privacy. Police officials reported that they received few complaints of assaults against women. Rape and other violent crimes against women were extremely rare. Under Shari'a the penalty would be flogging, banishment, or imprisonment for up to 5 years.

Although women traditionally have played a subordinate role in society, they participate in public life in growing numbers and gradually are participating at higher levels. During the year, there was one woman minister, the Minister of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare, and one woman nominated to the position of Atoll Chief (see Section 3). Women constitute 38 percent of government employees, and approximately 10 percent of uniformed NSS personnel. Well-educated women maintained that cultural norms, not the law, inhibit women's education and career choices. However, during the year, the Government continued law literacy programs and workshops on gender and political awareness in the outer atolls to make women aware of their legal rights. The Government also has built 15 women's centers in the atolls, which are facilities where family health workers can provide medical services. The centers also provide libraries and space for meetings and other activities with a focus on the development of women. In addition, in July 2001 the Government passed a family law that makes 18 years of age the minimum age of marriage for women.

Under Islamic practice, husbands may divorce their wives more easily than vice versa, absent any mutual agreement to divorce. Shari'a also governs intestate inheritance, granting male heirs twice the share of female heirs. A woman's testimony was equal only to one-half of that of a man in matters involving adultery, finance, and inheritance (see Section 1.e.). Women who work for wages receive pay equal to that of men in the same positions.

In 2000 the Cabinet created a Gender Equality Council to serve as an advisory body to the Government to help strengthen the role of women in society and to help ensure equal participation by women in the country's development; however, there were no reports of specific council actions during the year.

Children

The Government does not have a program of compulsory education, but it provided universal access to free primary education. The percentage of school-age children in school in 2001 was: (grades 1 to 5) 99 percent; (grades 6 to 7) 96 percent; and grades (8 to 10) 51 percent. Of the students enrolled, 49 percent were female and 51 percent are male. In many instances, education for girls was curtailed after the seventh grade, largely because parents do not allow girls to leave their home island for an island having a secondary school. Nevertheless, women enjoyed a higher literacy rate (98 percent) than men (96 percent).

Children's rights were incorporated into law, which specifically protects them from both physical and psychological abuse, including abuse at the hands of teachers or parents. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare has the authority to enforce this law, takes its responsibility seriously, and has received strong popular support for its efforts. Although unable to provide an exact number, the Ministry noted that there continued to be reports of child abuse during the year, including sexual abuse. Penalties for the sexual abuse of children range from banishment to imprisonment for up to 3 years. It is not known if there were any prosecutions for child abuse or child sexual abuse during the year. At year's end, the Government was reviewing the law to see if improvements and additional protections are necessary.

The Government was committed to the protection of children's rights and welfare. The Government was working with UNICEF to implement the rights provided for in the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government has established a National Council for the Protection of the Rights of the Child. Government policy provided for equal access to educational and health programs for both male and female children. In May the Government ratified two Optional Protocols, on the Children in Armed Conflict and Sale of Children, of the U.N. Convention on Children.

Persons with Disabilities

There is no law that specifically addresses the rights of persons with physical or mental disabilities. In 1999 the Government initiated a survey that identified 30,000 persons with disabilities in the country (primarily hearing and visually impaired). The Government has established programs and provided services for persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities usually were cared for by their families. When family care was unavailable, persons with disabilities were kept in the Institute for Needy People, which also assisted elderly persons. The Government provided free medication for all persons with mental disabilities in the islands, and mobile teams regularly visited patients with mental disabilities.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

While the Government does not expressly prohibit unions, it recognizes neither the right to form them nor the right to strike. However, small groups of similarly employed workers with mutual interests have formed associations, which include employers as well as employees. These associations may address a variety of issues, including workers' rights.

The work force consisted of between 70,000 and 75,000 persons, including expatriate labor and seasonal and part-time workers. The approximately 27,000 foreigners who work in the country make up almost half of the workers in the formal sector; most are employed in hotels, the retail and wholesale trade, factories, or on construction projects. The Government employed approximately 22,000 persons, both permanent and temporary. It estimated that the manufacturing sector employs approximately 15 percent of the labor force and tourism another 10 percent.

There are no laws specifically prohibiting antiunion discrimination by employers against union members or organizers.

Although workers can affiliate with international labor federations, this generally has not been the case. However, it is believed some seamen have joined such federations.

In 1995 the U.S. Government suspended the country's eligibility for tariff preferences under the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences because the Government failed to take steps to afford internationally recognized worker rights to workers.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law neither prohibits nor protects workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. Wages in the private sector are set by contract between employers and employees and are usually based on the rates for similar work in the public sector.

There were no reports of efforts to form unions or of strikes during the year.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Bonded Labor

The law does not prohibit forced or bonded labor, including by children; however, there were no reports that such practices occurred.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

There is no compulsory education law, but almost 98 percent of school-age children to grade 7 were enrolled in school (see Section 5). The law bars children under 14 years of age from "places of waged work and from work that is not suitable for that child's age, health, or physical ability or that might obstruct the education or adversely affect the mentality or behavior of the child." The law also prohibits government employment of children under the age of 16. There were no reports of children being employed in the small industrial sector, although children work in family fishing, agricultural, and commercial activities. The hours of work of young workers were not limited specifically by statute. A Unit for Children's Rights in the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare is responsible only for monitoring compliance with the child labor regulations, not enforcement.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The regulations for employee relations specify the terms that must be incorporated into employment contracts and address such issues as training, work hours, safety, remuneration, leave, fines, and termination. There was no national minimum wage for the private sector, although the Government has established wage floors for certain kinds of work such as government employment, which provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. Given the severe shortage of labor, employers must offer competitive pay and conditions to attract skilled workers.

There were no statutory provisions for hours of work, but the regulations required that a work contract specify the normal work and overtime hours on a weekly or monthly basis. In the public sector, a 7 hour day and a 5 day workweek have been established through administrative circulars from the President's office. Overtime pay in the public sector was instituted in 1990. There are no laws governing health and safety conditions. There were regulatory requirements that employers provide a safe working environment and ensure the observance of safety measures. It was unclear whether workers can remove themselves from unsafe working conditions without risking the loss of their jobs. The Ministry of Trade, Industries, and Labor has a Labor Dispute Settlement Unit to resolve wage and labor disputes and to visit worksites and enforce labor regulations.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons; however, there were no reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within the country. The Attorney General's Office believes that should a case arise, it could be addressed under Shari'a.